



# *via pacis*

*Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community*



Nukewatch photo

Bonnie Urfer and Mike Sprong cutting down ELF pole  
**“Silent Trident” Action Disarms Nuclear Navy’s  
Project ELF, page 2**





# Pivotal Perspectives of a Part-Time Potato Peeler

Robert Wright

Robert Wright is a retired union organizer & volunteer at the DMCW.

Does require some degree of skill. In I'd been hanging around the Catholic Worker House off and on for over four years before being provided with a potato peeler and entrusted with this particular task, which was, in itself, evidence of the success of my apprenticeship. In all time, nary a dish had been broken among the thousands I had washed; I never tracked in too much dirt after leaving the grounds or emptying the trash, nor had I dropped even one sack of groceries among the hundreds I carried from the basement pantry for distribution.

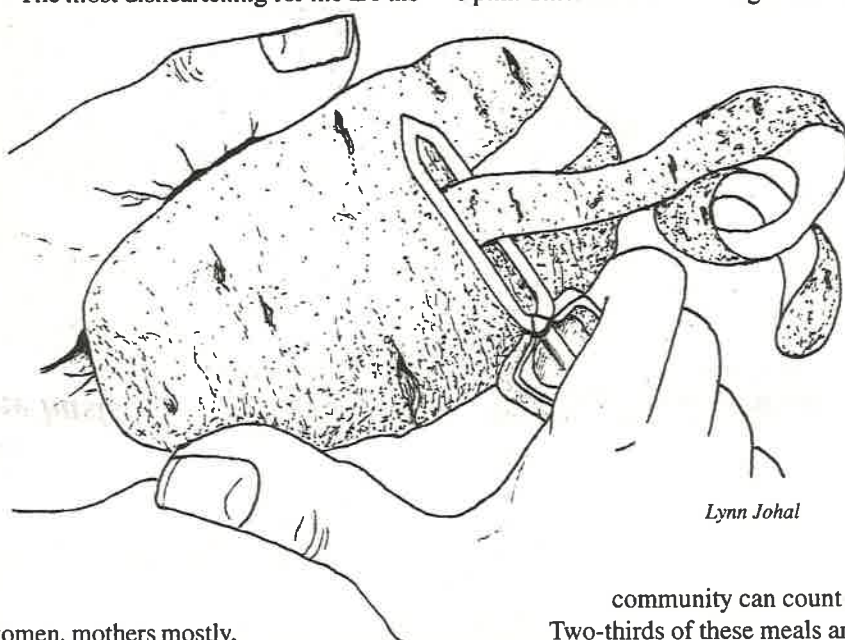
Talk about your ironic - no, *pathetic* contradictions. In an age of unprecedented prosperity, in the most abundant, wealthy, powerful country in the world, there are many hungry, desperate people. These contradictions come all too apparent at the DMCW. While one peels potatoes, even on a part-time basis, in a house where images of hunger, want, deprivation, need, insecurity, uncertainty, weariness and fear are reflected in the eyes of those we serve.

The good news is that because there is this house, this DMCW, many of these wretched faces, who come for help, find relief. Some even leave the house reflecting a measure of hope in their eyes that was not there before. So peeling potatoes at the DMCW is one real concrete way to experience what the DMCW's call the "Good News", put in spiritual terms the "Gospel". After nearly thirty-five years as a union representative, a lifetime of labor organizing, negotiating and picketing in support of economic and social justice for workers and their families, speaking to crowds, gatherings,

permanent home, neither trusting in, nor eligible for state provided services, sleep in abandoned buildings, under bridges, or in dumpsters. Some are unwashed and unshaven, with all their earthly possessions carried with them.

A symphony of languages merges together: Central American dialects are accompanied by the tones of Southeast Asia and the rapid-fire slang of the streets. Occasionally, one can overhear someone speaking "in tongues", unintelligible mutterings inspired by either the Holy Spirit or lack of proper medication. Others utter not a word nor a sound at all; their silence is the loudest noise of all.

The most disheartening for me are the



women, mothers mostly, usually single, sometimes pregnant, and/or with several toddlers. They are so very thin if young, so unhealthily overweight if older, nearly always the victims of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. They and their children are constantly exposed and vulnerable to whatever viruses are in season, faced with zero health care and extremely limited

access to competent medical resources.

"The feminization of poverty" is more than a concept at the DMCW.

I read somewhere that the wealth of a country, its greatness and character are truly measured by the manner in which its poorest, its weakest and its disabled are

treated. By this standard, a standard set by the Gospel, we are one of the weakest and poorest countries in the world.

For those who are not aware of the hospitality provided at the DMCW, Dingman House is open for off the street hospitality five days a week, between noon and 7 p.m. The House is closed on Mondays and Wednesdays for the overworked community to regroup and recharge its limited resources, and to recharge their depleted energies.

The works of hospitality are among the most basic: toilet facilities and the luxury of a hot shower with necessary toiletries and freshly laundered towels, a change of clothes when they have them, including a sock exchange, supplementing one's scarce wardrobe with a sweater, a jacket, jeans, and, if lucky, a pair of shoes that fit. Sacks of food are provided from the basement food pantry on a first-come, first-serve basis. Too often though, the pantry is limited; there are days when little or nothing is available to give.

Transients use the House as a permanent mailing address at which to receive notification from the VA of a doctor's appointment, a letter from

mother, or an unemployment check.

Guests have regular access to a phone to call about a job, inquire about disability benefits, or check on the status of a tardy social security check. Biweekly haircuts are available for guests, and CWs. Our friendly Polk County prosecutor, Fred Gay, comes to the house once a week for an hour to give legal counsel to anyone who shows.

Lunch is provided at noon and throughout the day. The main luncheon entree usually consists of Fr. Frank's curiously creative culinary concoctions. Most days there's also a salad, rolls and dessert.

The main meal of the day is served at 6 p.m. This is the meal that guests and the

community can count on.

Two-thirds of these meals are provided by a collection of regular monthly meal providers: church groups or organizations, individuals and families assigned monthly days on which they prepare a meal, bring it to the house and serve it. These delicious dinners provide not only balance and nourishment to guests and community members, but also a much-needed break from dinner-cooking chores usually provided by Carla and Mike.

One of the most popular efforts is the Saturday morning Free Food Store, supplied with salvaged and donated produce, mostly from Capital City Fruit Co. It is held at, and in conjunction with, Trinity Methodist Church, at the corner of 8th and College. Fruits and vegetables are handed out to any and all, from 10:00 until the supply is exhausted, usually by 10:20 a.m. Between 50 and 100 people show up at the Free Food Store, most of them children. The DMCW folks often supplement the donated fruits and vegetables with donated items from the Dingman House basement, especially children's clothes and toys.

On average, between 50 and 125 people use the house on a daily basis; between 25 and 60 people show up for the evening meals. Some guests at the House are regulars, dropping by daily for a hot cup of coffee, to share a meal, to visit and socialize or nap. There are one time visitors or frequent transients, here to shower, eat and get out of the weather. Many make the rounds from *Bethel Mission* to the *Door of Faith* to *Churches United*. Most appear near the end of the month, when the last SSI check is gone and the next has not yet arrived. Mothers come for a bag of groceries when child support checks are late or haven't even been sent. Almost all guests are on foot, except in those rare instances when a relative or very good friend provides access to mobile transportation.

All are greeted, welcomed and accepted as they are. Each is treated with empathy and respect. The framed etchings by Fretz Eichenberg on the walls of the House, of Christ in the bread line and of Christ with the homeless, are sufficient

reminders of just Who is being served in this House. Guests fill out no forms, answer no questions, and make no explanations to any governmental entity. With the sole condition of respecting the rights and dignity of our other guests and community members, each can enter or leave as they please.

As for the people who run the show, hosts if you will, just who are these Catholic Workers??? Were it not for their entirely nonprofessional roles as cooks or dishwashers, house cleaners or janitors, a first time visitor could not easily distinguish between hosts and guests. Fewer whiskers, perhaps, hair not quite so shaggy, and clothes just a little less threadbare, the Catholic Workers are the ones smiling the most, scurrying up and down the basement stairs, answering the phone, emptying the ashtrays, cleaning up the spills, distributing clean socks or towels, and patiently answering questions. Carla, Ed, Jackie, Richard, Mike, Mark and Fr. Frank, their lives consist of continual commitment, energetic empathy, consistent compassion, priceless poverty, dedication and determination in implementing the "Good News" in sacred service to Christ "Himself" as he is found in the least in our midsts. For each of these Catholic Workers, the Gospel is their life, as Jesus spoke, taught and lived it.

Most heartening for me is the way the DMCW is introducing the next generation to the Catholic Worker movement. High school and college students are frequent visitors to the house. They often help prepare and serve meals, clean bathrooms, take out garbage, do house and yard work, complete house renovations, and then stay to play checkers with guests, or listen to their woes and sympathize with their problems. From the perspective of this part-time Potato Peeler, their presence and participation is simply fantastic.

There is one final image of being at the DMCW which may have some meaning, either contradictory or challenging, or perhaps both. Mass is offered at Dingman House every Friday evening at 7:30. On one memorable Friday night in late November, as I looked out the window at the corner of 7th & Indiana, with freezing rain and sleet streaking down the glass, the devotional Act of sharing His Body inside was simultaneously contrasted with the desperate act of a woman selling her body on 7th Street outside, a common occurrence in this neighborhood. But, it struck me that cold November night that both activities, taking place just a few feet apart, seeming worlds apart, were in that instant somehow intimately intertwined.

**Located across the country and around the world, on the wrong side of the tracks and in the worst part of town, Catholic Workers bring life to the Beatitudes by living the Good News among the least. That includes peeling potatoes, even on a part-time basis.**

meetings and groups, writing newsletters and pamphlets, demanding workplace democracy and equality, I find myself actually writing about the Gospel! The Gospel's good news comes in many different forms, be it according to Matthew and Mark, Gene Deb and John Weeney, or Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, each in their own inimitable style, all refer to a common concept and an ideal: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, that you do unto Me."

The goal of all Catholic Worker houses is simply to fulfill that ideal. Located across the country and around the world, on the wrong side of the tracks and in the worst part of town, Catholic Workers bring life to the Beatitudes by living the Good News among the least. That includes peeling potatoes, even on a part-time basis. An intimate view is thus afforded into a few moments of the lives of the least among us, a view which is constantly changing, a hectic hodgepodge of race and culture. Men and women, infants and elderly, legal and illegal, immigrants and indigenous, are all present on any given day. Many, with no



**Friday Liturgy  
7:30 p.m.  
Dingman House,  
1310 7th St.**

Celebrate the Eucharist and spend time with friends.





## A letter from Fr. Frank Cordaro

Dear Friends and Supporters:

After months of prayer, discussion and discernment with Bishop Charron, my brother priests and close friends and supporters, I have decided to do what Bishop Charron is now asking me to do so I may return to a full and active priestly ministry in the Diocese of Des Moines.

After a complete review of my situation, Bishop Charron has asked me to reaffirm and recommit myself to the *Profession Of Faith* and the *Declaration Of Freedom And Knowledge* that I signed before I was ordained Nov. 30, 1984. In particular, the Bishop has asked me to reaffirm and recommit myself to my promise to "both embrace and maintain each and every article which has been either asserted and declared by the ordinary magisterium of the Church, or defined by her solemn judgment, concerning the doctrine of faith and morals, just as she proposes them, especially those which concern the mystery of the holy Church of Christ, her Sacrament, the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff," found in the *Profession Of Faith* and to "comply obediently with all those things which my superiors prescribe, and the discipline of the Church demands," found in the *Declaration Of Freedom And Knowledge*.

I have taken the time to reflect and pray about these promises and feel that I can reaffirm and recommit myself to them, especially in regards to the areas of concern that most trouble Bishop Charron. These concerns have to do with what

Bishop Charron calls my history of public dissent of official church teachings found in my homilies, church bulletins, public writings and gatherings, especially regarding the ordination of women, birth control and church reform. I realize I have at times taken a public confrontational approach to advocate for church reform. I will make every effort not to do so in the future. Since it appears to me that so many of the peace and justice, war, and militarism issues I speak of are connected with sexism and patriarchy, it will not be easy for me to take a less public approach to what I believe are necessary reforms for our Church. But I am willing to make that effort.

Beyond this, the Bishop and many of my brother priests have asked me to change my attitude toward the Church, saying that I am too negative about the institutional Church. Together, they have told me that I don't always appreciate the role of the diocesan priest whose primary work is the celebration of the Eucharist, preaching the Word and administering the sacraments. As a public representative of the Church, there are limits to what a priest can publicly say and do regarding the Church. The boundaries are set by the teachings of the Church and the leadership of the diocesan bishop.

Throughout this process I have come to appreciate Bishop Charron's obligation in conscience to expect those who represent him and the Church in ordained ministry will uphold and teach what the Church

*continued on page 6*

### Annual Midwest Catholic Worker Gathering September 15 - 17 Sugar Creek, Iowa

This year's hosting CW communities are the rural communities of Strangers and Guest CW Community in Maloy, IA, ph: (515) 785-2321 and the Anathoth Community in Luck, WI, ph: (715) 472-8721. Call either of these communities for more details.



Our community garden is in full swing! Meredith Bruns and Erick Davidson are the DMCW community garden coordinators this year. DMCW photo

## "Silence Trident" Action Disarms Nuclear Navy's Project ELF

On Saturday June 24th, two peace activists, performing an "act of nonviolent direct disarmament and crime prevention," cut down three poles supporting transmission lines for a controversial U.S. submarine communication system located near Clam Lake. Bonnie Urfer, 48, and Michael Sprong, 37, both of rural Luck, WI used hand-held Swede saws to cut the poles, taking the transmitter off-line. The two waited over an hour for the arrival of Ashland County Sheriff's Deputies who took them into custody. Charges have yet to be filed. A witness to the action, Barbara Katt, 42, also of Luck, WI, is believed to have been taken into custody as well.

This is the fifth time since 1984 that the transmitter — known as Project ELF (Extremely Low Frequency) — has been shut down by activists who simply walked up to poles supporting the 28-mile-long transmitter antennae and cut them down with hand saws. All the previous actions resulted in prison sentences. The transmitter

sits on public land in the Chequamegon National Forest. Another ELF facility is in Michigan's Escanaba State Forest.

Urfer and Sprong, who called their action "Silence Trident," were apparently well acquainted with other "disarmament" and/or crime prevention actions because they



carried with them reams of documents they say justify their action as a modern day Boston Tea

Party. The documents explain the justification for their Saturday afternoon action.

According to Bob Aldridge of the Pacific Life Research Center ([www.nuclearfiles.org/plrc](http://www.nuclearfiles.org/plrc)), Project ELF sends coded, one-way messages to deeply submerged Trident missile-firing submarines. The submarines can be ordered simultaneously to the surface where they can each

launch 24 missiles, carrying up to 192 nuclear warheads. From these forward-based "platforms", enemy missile and command posts can be destroyed in less than 15 minutes. This, Urfer and Sprong claim, makes Project ELF the "trigger" for over 50 percent of U.S. strategic nuclear weapons. In documents the two brought to the site, the two charge that the aggressive nature of the ELF Trident system makes it illegal under international laws and treaties, as well as under domestic law.

In 1983 a federal judge stopped the construction of Project ELF for environmental, health, and safety reasons only to have the decision reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for reasons of "national security." Throughout the 1990s, Congressional opposition to the transmitter has been consistent with six out of nine representatives and both U.S. senators from Wisconsin leading the call to cut funding for Project ELF. Over 550 protest arrests have taken place at the transmitter sites since the end of the Cold War.

Urfer and Sprong also emphasize that the U.S. Navy has never proven that Project ELF is not a risk to residents in the vicinity of the facility and to the environment. They say that their action is justified because ELF is an imminent threat to people and the environment.

For more information and updates contact: Trident Resistance Network-Midwest, PO Box 373, Luck, WI 54853. Phone: (715) 472-4185. Fax: (715) 472-4184. email: [nukewtch@win.bright.net](mailto:nukewtch@win.bright.net)

### Photo Spread on pages 4 & 5

An unexpected blessing for me at the Catholic Worker has been the opportunity to photograph beauty as I see it around me. The photos include friends and fellow workers: Janelle, Carmen, Darleena and Rene. Some volunteers for St. Benedict's in Minnesota include Tracy and Kate. My thanks for the joy.

by Richard Flamer

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by Norman Sea

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### via pacis

Des Moines Catholic Worker Community Newsletter  
PO Box 4551

Des Moines IA 50306

Editor: Fr. Frank Cordaro

Layout and design: Lynn Johal

Copy editors: Bridget Flynn, Mark Messer

Subscriptions & correspondence: Fr. Cordaro at above address

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the surmaon on the Mount. In the spirit of the Catholic Worker tradition, we are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening our home for those in need of food, clothing, bedding, a shower, or a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that foster social justice.

#### Bishop Dingman House

1310 7th St.  
(515) 243-0765

#### Community members:

Frank Cordaro  
Richard Flamer  
Jerry McDermott  
Mike Thompson

#### Mrs. Ligutti House

1301 8th St.  
(515) 246-9887

#### Community members:

Bridget Flynn (summer intern)  
Mark Messer  
Norman Searah  
Graham Stanford (summer intern)  
Vern "Ted" Walker (summer intern)

#### Community Garden

1307 8th St.  
(515) 283-0025

#### Garden Coordinators:

Meredith Bruns  
Erick Davidson

#### Lazarus House

1317 8th St.  
(515) 246-1499

#### Community members:

Ed Bloomer  
The Dawson-Ngamo family: Carla, Richard, Julius, Joshua & Jordan  
Jackie & Landan Robertson  
Irving Schroeder



# Community

## NEWS

Carla Dawson-Ngamo

Hi! We've been busier than ever lately. The community regrouping after the loss of Michael Sprong and Beth Heim, two great community members not easy to replace. We and Beth are doing great. Luck, WI. They are with the Catholic Community Farm. They do maple trees and gardening. If all goes as planned, by the time you receive this issue of VP you'll know they moved to Luck.

Ed Bloomer visited his family in Louisville, KY at a later time. Norman drove him home and went back to pick him up. They are a dynamic duo.

Norman Searah is connected with a Native American tribe in Ohio and is planning his second trip to deliver donations. (Read more in Norm's Whereabouts)

Mark Messer is studying dance forms. He also works at St. Joseph's Emergency Family shelter. His mother Pat visited over Easter weekend. It was nice to meet her. Mark also arrested for his first time at Mother's Day Protest at ELF. Read about it in this VP.

Mike Thompson has been working as foreman of a work crew tuck pointing Jordan United Methodist Church. Lyle Ell, from Home Recycling is a pastor. Richard Flamer lined the job. The work crew consists of DMCWers and guest. Besides overseeing this job, Richard has been busy trying to

complete unfinished jobs before he goes to Chiapas Mexico in June. Some of these jobs are here at the house, like the Dingman House attic.

Fr. Frank Cordaro has heard from the Bishop Charron. He has regained his faculties as a priest. We're hoping that whatever comes down, he's allowed to stay at the DMCW, mostly for his mother's sake. Angela often joins Fr. Frank when he is on house duty. We now know where Fr. Frank gets all his energy. Never a dish, ash tray or plant goes unattended when Angela is around. Fr. Frank is also getting ready to go to Chiapas Mexico with Richard.

Jerry McDermott, the oldest member of the DMCW, turned 65 in Jan. He fits in well with Mike T., Richard F. and Fr. Frank in the old men's residence at Dingman House. Irving Schroeder continues to do a great job in doing the community laundry in the basement of Lazarus House. He's also a big help for me in keeping Lazarus House clean. I don't know what I would do without him.

Three volunteers are living with us this summer: Ted, Graham and Bridget. Vern "Ted" Walker is a summer volunteer from Notre Dame University. He is a wonderful young man. There is not a task so great or so small that he doesn't give 110%. A better role model for our younger community members,

and especially my boys, could not be found. He is a gentle man with a good measure of patience and a heart of gold.

Graham Stanford is Ted's cousin. He's the summer surprise so far. He drove Ted here and decided to stay. He is an angel with a tough exterior. It is a joy to see him work with Ted. He wants to learn how to build and rehab houses. He's come to the right place. Richard is glad to teach him the trade; all the while our houses are getting fixed up.

Bridget Flynn is our third summer volunteer. Bridget was here with other students from St. Louis University over their spring break. She decided then and there that she was going to spend the summer here. It's great to have a young woman who feels a call to service just show up. Bridget came without the motivation of college credits for her summer help. It gives us an insight into the kind of person she really is! Frank's already

discovered she has a skill in editing, if this issue of VP comes to you with good grammar, you have Bridget to thank.

My sister Jackie and my nephew Landan have been with us five months. Jackie is a blessing! She is my good side. The community finally convinced her to officially sign up. Now she must show up at community meetings and share in house duties. Everybody's happy she jumped in. And Landan was "Amazing!" So I'm told by Richard Flamer, describing how Landan worked on the highest level of scaffolding while tuck pointing the church.

My three sons, Julius, Josh and Jordan have all reached milestones. Julius completed 10th grade and will now play his sports at the varsity level. Joshua is moving on to middle school and the 6th grade. Jordan is going to be a 4th grader. We were all proud of him when he was one of 32 African American

young men awarded the Judge Luther T. Glanton Award, given by Omega Psi Phi.

My husband Richard is working on his nursing skills. He's also earning his certification in massage therapy, while holding down a full time job. The energizer bunny has nothing on him.

And I have finished my algebra class - truly a miracle! I'm grateful for the prayers and encouraging words I've received throughout the semester. I could not have done this without Barb Mitchell. "Barb, you're the best tutor I've ever had! God Bless You!"

On behalf of the DMCW community, thanks to everyone who helps us keep this place going, from the folks who keep us in prayer, to those who fix our evening meals or volunteer to help cover the house, to those who donated. Thank you all! We are grateful for everything. May this summer bring you all happiness.



DMCW Community photo (from bottom left to right): Richard Flamer, Graham Stanford, Ted Walker, Mark Messer, Brian Terrell (Maloy CW), Meredith Bruns (neighbor), Jackie Robertson, Mike Thompson, Julius Johnson, Norman Searah, Ed Bloomer, Frank Cordaro, Bridget Flynn, Jordan Dawson, and Jerry McDermott. Community members not in photo: Carla Dawson-Ngamo, Josh Dawson, Richard Ngamo, Landan Robertson & Irving Schroeder. (DMCW photo)

## Norman's Whereabouts

Norman Searah

A few days ago I went to Chicago to watch a baseball game with a couple of friends from work. Chicago lost to Cincinnati but beat Cincinnati on Sunday. After the game, instead of taking the subway which seemed to be quite crowded, I decided to walk to the bus station. What I thought was going to be a short walk to the bus station turned into a major hiking trip. I must have lost a few pounds. I did a lot of thinking, singing and stopped a few times to rest and talk to people. I made it back to the bus station just in time to catch the last bus of the night for Des Moines.

As I was walking, I did a lot of thinking and reflection on my diabetes, which I now look at as a living partner with which I share my life. These days I've been suggesting to people that they should get their blood

checked, even if they don't suspect they have diabetes.

As I walked, I couldn't help but think that our country and other countries spend more



money on weapons of death than on cures for life. Sometimes I can't help thinking that there might be cures held by some medical drug companies, yet like the car makers who could build a better and cheaper car, they don't want the public to know so that they can make as much money as they want.

As I walked, I checked my feet. Every few steps I stopped to rest. On one of my feet checking stops, a homeless man, who was selling copies of Streetwise, sat next to me and we talked. Streetwise is a

newspaper put out by and sold by homeless people in Chicago. He talked about the street people and places in Chicago that homeless people lived. I talked about the homeless people in Iowa. I bought a copy of Streetwise from him and walked on.

As I walked I got to thinking about going home to see my mother. I just called her last night. I've got to confess, I don't talk to my mother as often as I should. Fr. Frank and my mother can tell you and that goes for writing letters too. I love my mother very much and miss her often. Between her and my father, who died in 1982, they raised six boys and six girls the best way they could, with a lot of love and caring. I'm the oldest of the children who are all adults now. I guess they never understood why I became a Catholic Worker and stayed in Iowa all these years.

I'm closer to my mother than

I am to my brothers and sisters. The reason is that over the years we hardly ever talked and when we did, it wasn't long enough for us to keep up with each other. So I've lost touch with my brothers and sisters. Over the years my mom let me know how the others were doing and the others seem to do the same, with my mom usually finding herself in the middle of things.

So, even though I may be a stranger to my family, I would like to go home and spend some time with my mother. Right now she's kind of worried about my coming to visit her and the van breaking down along the way. I told her that she's not the only one; Fr. Frank keeps reminding me that my van gets less than 12 miles to the gallon. I remind them both that I went down to Louisville, KY to pick Ed Bloomer up from his mother's. And I'm getting ready to go SD to take needed supplies to American Indians there on June

8th and 9th. I'm not going alone though; I'm taking Bob Wright with me. Bob's one of the extended members of the DMCW community and volunteers a lot of his time working with us. So, with any kind of luck, I'll be making the long trip home to Massachusetts soon. If not, hopefully Mom and I will at least have some good times on the phone.

When I finally got to the bus station and got on the bus to Des Moines, I got to really thinking about how I really felt about my plans to leave the DMCW this September. It's true. I'm leaving the DMCW, but I'm not giving up the work or what I believe in. There are many reasons for my leaving and my health is a big one. I plan to continue my trips to SD and maybe help out groups that work with the poor in rural America. Right now I have no idea of where I want to go but I'll keep in touch.











## No-Fly Zones go on Trial in Des Moines

by Jeffrey J. Weiss

Are the no-fly zones deployed by the United States and Britain over Northern and Southern Iraq a violation of international law? If so, is a citizen of the United States legally authorized to attempt to prevent their enforcement, even by trespassing on a military base? For several months, activists who formed the Iowa Coalition to End War Crimes Against Iraq talked about the probability of war crimes perpetuated by the United States against Iraq. On March 4, 2000, they found an opportunity to do something about it. Twenty-two people formed a human blockade across the entrance at the Iowa Air National Guard and for a few minutes, disrupted normal operations for the military. That included drawing attention to the preparation of the Iowa Air Guard for their fourth trip to Turkey, where they participate in Operation Northern Watch over the skies of Iraq. All twenty-two demonstrators were arrested and several spent the night at the Polk County courthouse. Four of the demonstrators pled not guilty and demanded jury trials. Charges against three of the defendants were dropped the day of the trial.

Thirty supporters, some of whom were arrested with Sprong on March 4, packed the courtroom for testimony that included a *pro bono* appearance by Richard A. Falk of Princeton University. Falk has authored textbooks on international law. He has appeared on behalf of activists in courtrooms across the United States, arguing citizens have a responsibility to demand that the government obeys international law.

On June 5, 2000 "The State of Iowa v. Michael Sprong" began with an opening statement from defense attorney Sally Frank of Des Moines. Frank argued that her client had attempted legal remedies to confront authorities about the illegality of the activities of the Iowa Guard in Iraq. He exchanged a series of letters with Governor Tom Vilsack, passed out leaflets, and participated in demonstrations at the state capitol. When this failed, Sprong tried to speak to members of the Air Guard at the base to convince them that the no-fly zones violated the United

Nations Charter. He trespassed onto the base to tell them a war crime was being committed. "I was there to enforce the law," Sprong argued.

So what are the no-fly zones? The United States, Britain, and France set up no-fly zones after the Gulf War that cover half the territory of Iraq. France left the coalition after the U.S. and Britain bombed Iraq in December, 1998. According to trial testimony, the rules of engagement state that when U.S.

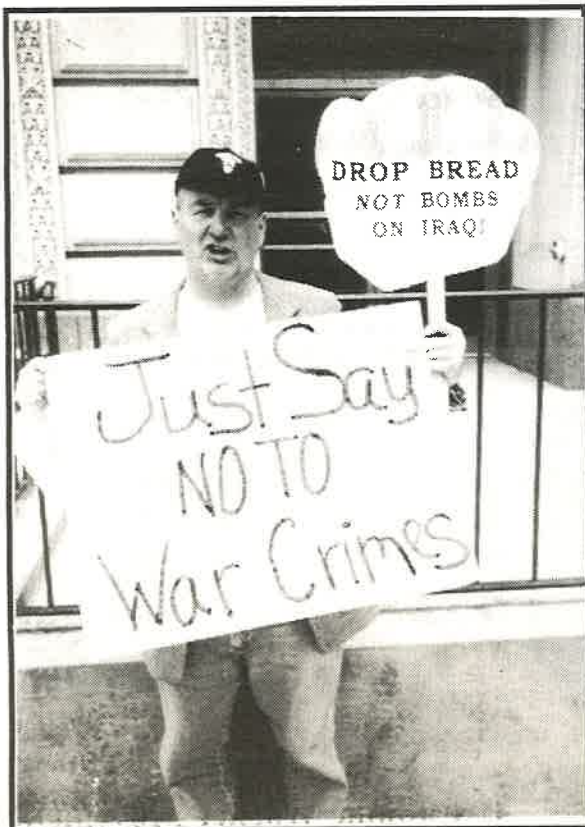
after all, was established to prevent war. Falk testified, "There is no authorization that provides the authority to enforce the no-fly zones." Though UNSCR 678 gave the U.N. the authority to use force to remove Iraq from Kuwait, UNSCR 687 established a cease-fire, terminating the earlier authorization to use force. If the United States and Britain want to use force, they need a new resolution explicitly authorizing it. In light of the recent attitude of the Security Council against the no-fly zones, it is doubtful they could be successful.

After the state suggested it was "only his opinion" the no-fly zones were illegal and that other law professors argued they were legal, Falk responded, "It is difficult to find any experts on international law outside of the United States that take the position that the no-fly zones are legal." He explained that in the U.S. "Many international law experts see their role as rationalizing U.S. policy, no matter what it is." Falk said citizens are responsible to force government to comply with international law "because it underlies all connections that people have with one another."

Article VI of the U.S.

Constitution states treaties are the supreme law of the land. The Supreme Court has ruled customary international law is part of the U.S. judicial process (customary international law is, for example, when courts hold that protection of U.S. property abroad is in accordance with the law). Falk also raised the question of whether the United Nations Security Council can violate the U.N. Charter. In the case of the Security Council, economic sanctions against Iraq, for example, violate the Geneva Convention which prohibits "starvation of civilians as a method of warfare". Falk testified that Sprong's attempt to dialogue with members of the Air Guard was reasonable. "If members of the Iowa Guard knew that it was an illegal policy, they could be accessories to an international criminal act."

In the end, Sprong was found guilty and received a sentence for 40 hours of community service and one year of probation. Prosecutor Fred Gay stated in his closing remarks that, "we need more citizens like Michael Sprong". Meanwhile, the bombings continue and, according to the U.N., 4,000 Iraqi children die



DMCW photo

and British jet fighters assess Iraqi radar is locked on their planes, they may fire at them.

During the trial, Lt. Col. Steve Young, an attorney for the Air Guard, and Gregory Sisk, who worked for the U.S. Justice Department (1986-1989), made arguments for the no-fly zones. Young said they were "pursuant to a *de marche* issued by the Western governments to Iraq advising it that the no-fly zone would be enforced by denying Iraq the use of combat against its citizens." (It should be noted that when the Kurds in the North and Shiites in the South rose up against the government of Iraq in 1991 they were denied military help from the West and their rebellion was crushed.)

Though a government to government communiqué is not independent legal authority, in this case, "the underlying legal basis was supplied by UNSCR 678," according to the Air Force attorney. This was the resolution set up under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter that authorized the original use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Falk took the stand as an expert witness to argue that the use of force requires a United Nations Security Council Resolution that has to be explicit. The U.N.,

every month as a result of sanctions. In a private conversation, Falk observed, "When Americans don't die, there is no discourse."

Jeffrey J. Weiss is an

adjunct professor of Political Science at Des Moines Area Community College and works for the American Friends Service Committee.

## Letter from Fr. Cordaro

continued from p 2...

teaches. Ultimately the Bishop is the one who must make the decisions in these matters. Bishop Charron must follow his conscience also. If I want to work as a priest in our diocese, I need to respect this obligation of conscience that Bishop Charron has assumed.

As reasonable and necessary as Bishop Charron's concerns might sound to some, I know for many of my friends and comrades in the *Catholic Worker, Resistance and Call To Action* movements, the promise to not publicly advocate for reforms in the Church amounts to a compromise. To these friends and comrades I must admit they are correct.

I must also admit I fully knew and was aware of these flawed and sexist faults in the Catholic Church when I got ordained. It was enough for me at that time to 'be able to' openly and publicly advocate for church reforms, be ordained and live within the discipline of the institutional Church.

Two things have changed since my 1985 ordination. 1) The Church has changed: In 1985, Catholics, both lay and clergy, were free to openly and publicly advocate for Church reform. This is not the case today.

The conditions Bishop Charron set for me to regain my priestly faculties are the same conditions any priest, religious or lay person must accept if they are to minister or work for the Catholic Church. These conditions may vary in degree from one diocese to the next, from one bishop to the next. Yet, for the vast majority of people ministering and working for the Catholic Church this condition of public silence in these areas is a reality. I have three lay brothers, who work in three different dioceses and it is the same for them. I'm not saying that this is a good thing for the Church. What I am saying is that this is a reality.

2) I have changed. In 1985 I only believed I was called to be a priest. Today, after 15 years of priestly ministry, I both believe and know I'm called to be a priest.

During this year's leave of absence, I reviewed and reassessed what my best role and position in the Catholic Church should be. I've come to a personal conclusion that I love being a priest. I love the work of a priest: celebrating the Eucharist, preaching the Word,

and administering the sacraments. And, despite her human flaws, there is far more good about the Catholic Church than there is bad. The Catholic Church is the tradition and faith community that passed on the Faith to me. It's given me far more than I will ever be able to give back in return. And, if the Church will have me, I will do everything in my power, short of violating my conscience, to remain a priest in her service.

Regarding Church reform, I know there are many good men and women working to see them become a reality. They are both inside and outside the Church. They are clergy, religious and lay. These are very important issues for many people in the Church. Like so many others, I will now need to find other ways, less public and confrontational, to further the concerns for Church reform.

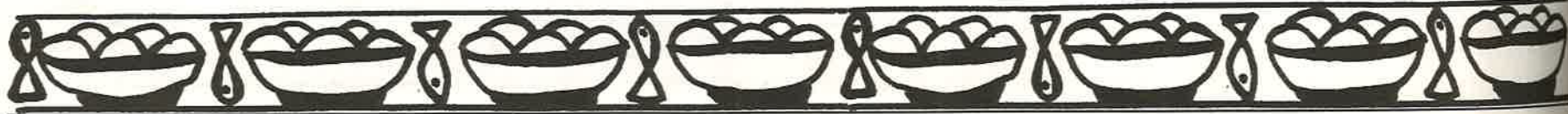
In regards to my "law breaking" nonviolent resistance activities, it is my hope that in accepting any pastoral assignment, allowances and an understanding be made. With these allowances and understandings, I in turn must respect the fact that Bishop Charron has a say in these matters, that he needs the freedom to say 'no, not at this time' to me if he and those with whom he consults would recommend against my participating in a given witness for the good of the diocese and my pastoral assignment. To this end, the bishop and I will need to engage ourselves in open dialogue about any witness I may consider which would result in any significant jail time and affect my ability to fulfill my assignment. This will involve a measure of give and take on both sides. I count it a big plus that both Bishop Charron and myself are willing to enter this open dialogue.

Does this now settle all the issues that led me to take this leave of absence year? Probably not. The diocese and I are going to need to live with this arrangement.

I'd like to thank all those in the past year who helped me along in my discernment, especially my brother priests. Without their help I don't believe we would be this far along. I especially want to thank Bishop Charron for going the extra mile with me in coming to this agreement. I ask you all for your prayers and support.

Sincerely,

Fr. Frank Cordaro





# Resistance Notes

## Mark Messer Busted!

Mark Messer

The guide to hopping trains is, "Never board a moving train. The very next sentence is, 'if you do, throw your backpack on board first.' This is you to follow through. On Mother's Day weekend, McGary, Mali Lorenz and I traveled to Ashland, WI, site of U.S. Navy's Project ELF (Extremely Low Frequency), which jolts the northern bedrock with electricity sufficient to

law, publicize it, and obey it." Delivery of the petition required civil disobedience, crossing the property line and trespassing onto the site.

I attended nonviolence training the day before the action. A train, *Sign-Up-If-You-Might-Cross-the-Line*, rolled through. I held my backpack and thought to myself, "I best not throw it. I may ride the train. . . but. . ." That evening I realized I would not cross the line. "Nah, not necessary, too

nestled in the same nuclear nest: nuclear power, nuclear waste, the bombing of Hiroshima, a girl who survived the blast; her scalp later itching due to surfacing shards of glass, her mother picking them out. My mom read me that story when I was young. I cried in sorrow.

On Mother's Day, outside the ELF site, I envisioned nuclear weapons and project ELF slyly, with electromagnetic and radioactive tentacles, encircling and grasping, the



Line crossers with mother earth and officers at ELF

Mali Lorenz photo

radio waves that travel between the Earth's surface and the ionosphere, actually penetrating the sea, to nuclear submarines at any time. We went to participate in annual Mother's Day protest, a tradition, that police converse pleasantly with officers as they issue citations. Illegal under international law, Project ELF is a trigger to Navy's Trident nuclear weapons system. In the demonstration, participants had opportunity to carry a petition on the illegality of nuclear weapons to ELF personnel. It read, in part, "Enforcement of these laws lies in individual governments and not with their citizens. People must require their heads to read and study the

much trouble."

The next morning I woke up refreshed — renewed — and ready. "Yeah, I will do this line crossing bit." I felt content, satisfied, and at peace; I would do the right thing.

At the sight, during the final speaker before the line crossing, I flooded with thought and emotion. I realized the mechanics, the nitty gritty of the operation, as well as the big picture, everything this little grit of mine was part and party to, and my little grit's place in it all. I did not want to disrespect the officers by trespassing after they asked me to leave. I sat, bathed in the beauty of the earth.

My mom has talked about nuclear power and war since I was very small. My mind holds many nucs closely together,

Earth. Amongst over 100 beautiful, harmonious and charged folks, enjoying each other's presence and their surroundings, their little grit's speaking up in it all, I sat; the Earth stood, violated. Yet it still held all our little grits, nestled closely together, in the same living nest, shining.

Happy Earth contrasted sharply with Nuclear Strangulation Earth in my mind's eye; it is obscene that monumental ugliness is made! So much effort over so much time has gone into building a war machine that extends into the earth, air and sea. Instead, all this effort could have been, can be, is now in this little moment, and will be channeled into resolving conflict rather than reinforcing it! This is a change from selfish contention to graceful generosity, giving of the self rather than taking of the other; suspicious guarding of the

## The People's Campaign for Nonviolence July 1st through August 9th



From July 1st to August 9th, 2000, people from every religion, class and way of life will gather in Washington, DC to call for an end to our culture of violence and injustice and for the creation of a culture of nonviolence and justice.

Leading peace and justice groups from around the country have pledged to bring one hundred people to spend one day or more in prayerful vigil and peaceful protest at either the Pentagon, White House, or Congress.

Over a period of 40 days, thousands of people will make their voices for peace and justice heard. After an opening evening program and a day of nonviolent training and workshops at Howard University, we will hold a daily presence and nonviolent direct action at the White House, Congress and the Pentagon, calling for disarmament and justice.

Each day a different group from around the country will maintain this call for peace and justice. Each evening, we will gather for prayer and reflection lead by a guest speaker.

### For more information contact:

The People's Campaign for Nonviolence, DC Office  
PO Box 39127, Friendship Station,  
NW Washington, DC 20016  
ph: (202) 244-0951 email: wdcfor@excite.com

or

F.O.R. - People's Campaign for Nonviolence  
PO Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960 ph: (914) 358-4601  
Web Site: www.forusa.org

## Catholic Worker Movement Day: Aug. 4

August 4th is designated Catholic Worker Movement Day for the People's Campaign for Nonviolence. The Dorothy Day CW Community in Washington D.C. is hosting this national gathering of Catholic Workers. For more information and details call them at (202) 882-9649.

The DMCW is sending reps. to Washington. If you are interested in joining us, contact Mark Messer: (515) 246-9887.

self is replaced by kindness and generosity issued faithfully forth. What a sigh of relief and cry of joy will spring from the consciousness of the world! This is spiritual renewal!

I was thus compelled to action. I crossed the line. I got busted. There was no slapping on of handcuffs, no officer's hand on my head so I would not bump it getting in the cruiser bound for jail, no getting in the cruiser, and no jail! In fact, I

almost missed being cited all together. I just crossed the line and minded my own business.

After a few minutes, most people who crossed the line knelt together in a row. I joined them. Officer Tony cited all the other protesters who had crossed the line and asked, "Is there anyone who hasn't been cited?"

"Yes," I answered, and rose to get my citation.

## Vigil and Line-crossing at StratCom/ Hiroshima Nagasaki Remembered & Resisted August 6 through August 9



We invite you to join us for a 3-day vigil at the gates of Offutt Air Force Base, home of the Strategic Command (StratCom) in Bellevue, NE. Come stand and pray with us as we commemorate the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan on August 6 and August 9, 1945. Contemplate the work and mission of StratCom, the challenge it poses to all life on our planet and the solemn claim it makes on the soul and spirit of our nation.

The vigil begins Sunday, August 6 at 8:00 a.m., the hour the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Monday, Aug 9th at 11:00 a.m., the hour the United States dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

We'll be vigiling 12 hours during the day, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. We'll return to Our Lady of Guadalupe Rectory at 4930 South 10th St. in Omaha, (ph. 402-731-2196) for prayer, food, relaxation, socializing and sleep between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.

A line-crossing is planned. Anyone interesting in the line-crossing needs to contact the DMCW. Everyone is welcome to come with us in this annual witness & vigil. Come for an hour or for the whole three days.

For more information, contact the DMCW: (515) 243-0765.



Des Moines Fast 2000 vigilers in front of St. Ambrose Cathedral during a 2-week-long fast in April to close the School of the Americas. From left to right: Frank Cordaro, Richard Flamer, Bill Basinger, Brian Terrei, Jean Basinger, Angela Cordaro, Ed Bloomer and Carla Dawson-Ngamo. DMCW photo



*via pacis*

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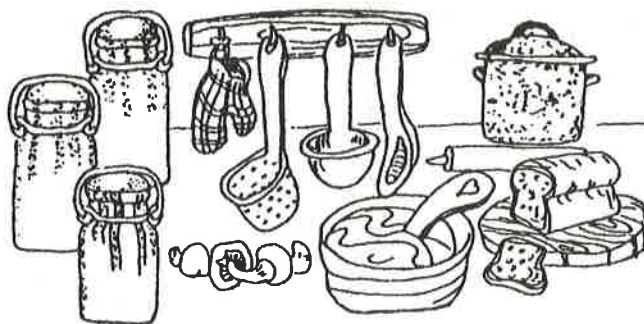
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## DMCW NEEDS

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Yikes! Our food pantry is almost bare so we have little to offer our guests in need. Donations are most scarce in the summer months. We can always use canned and dry goods, as well as toiletries. Presently, we especially need the following:

**coffee**  
**100% fruit juice**  
**breakfast cereal**  
**canned fruit, vegetables, beans & meat**  
**diapers**  
**maxi pads and tampons**  
**toothbrushes and toothpaste**  
**disposable razors and shaving cream**  
**toilet paper**  
**shampoo & soap**



As always, we are so grateful for your generosity. Please consider giving a small donation to help cover other expenses such as: utilities, house and vehicle maintenance, property taxes and newsletter printing. Also, we are always looking for handy folks and work crews to help with much needed house rehab and maintenance.

**Thanks for your continued support.**

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community  
1310 7th St., Des Moines, IA (515) 243-0765  
Please send contributions to: P.O. Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50314

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